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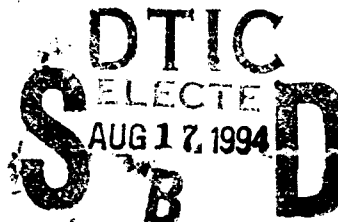
NAVAL WAR COLLEGE  
Newport, R.I.

**U.S. LOGISTICS VULNERABILITY:  
MAJOR REGIONAL CONFLICT WITH IRAN**

by

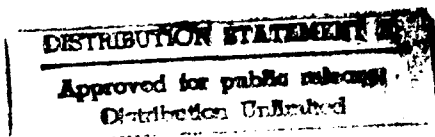
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CDR, USN



A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Operations Department.

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**Abstract of  
U.S. Logistics Vulnerability:  
Major Regional Conflict with Iran**

The United States has chosen to emphasize a power projection role for its military. This capability proved itself during Operation Desert Storm. However, Desert Storm also pointed out a significant weakness. To stop the U.S. military, an enemy need only interrupt the logistics chain.

How well does the U.S. guard its logistic ability? This paper addresses the possibility that a dedicated, marginally capable opponent could do significant damage to the U.S. logistics system. This in turn could cause the U.S. to abandon or change national priorities.

## Preface

This report is speculative. While presented from the Iranian point of view, it does not purport to represent actual Iranian intentions. Similarly, the U.S. approach envisioned is not necessarily one which the U.S. would take. I have used no classified sources (or even limited distribution or official use sources) in the preparation of this paper.

Having said the above, let me emphasize that the postulated positions and capabilities and intentions presented for Iran and the United States rest on a firm ground of documentation. Additionally the recent evidence of the 1991 Gulf War, and its subsequent breast-beating and "lessons learned" literature has contributed to the foundation of this paper.

I believe that there is a significant weakness in one of our centers of gravity, our logistics might. This paper highlights it. Fortunately, it is a weakness that can be combated with alertness and awareness on the part of the logistics forces, and overcome by astute force planning to procure counter weapons.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

**"Tehran is convinced that confrontation with the United States over access to the Near East, as well as the destruction of Israel, is inevitable and imminent."<sup>1</sup>**

There is a great deal of concern about Iran's re-armament. This re-armament has engendered questions about the intentions of the Iranian government, which remain open, despite numerous attempts to provide answers. I don't presume to know the answers myself, but propose one possible alternative, which is of vital interest to the United States, and will point out the need for re-evaluation of the current U.S. defense posture and trend to decreased effectiveness.

A key element of the [Iranian] leadership's strategy for the rebirth of the nation was the modernization of the armed forces and the restoration of its defensive capabilities. This necessity was reinforced by the Gulf War (1990-91) which displayed the resolve and the military capabilities of the Western countries to the full, the subsequent revelations about Iraq's military-industrial complex, and the multiplication of political instabilities to the north, west and east of Iran.<sup>2</sup>

**Re-armament.** A number of sources have pointed out Iran's re-armament. In 1992, Jan's Defence Weekly estimated that Iran was expected to spend \$50 billion on defense over the next five years.<sup>3</sup> Several other alarming indicators were reported:

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1. 240 major state-owned plants are producing military equipment, and 12,000 privately-owned workshops are manufacturing military related products;<sup>5</sup>
2. The U.S. sold more than \$300 million worth of high-tech gear (oscilloscopes, computers, aircraft parts, radar and navigation equipment) to Iran in the last year (1991).

3. Iran is believed to be capable, due to reverse-engineering taught by China, to produce F-4 (Phantom) and F-14 (Tomahawk) spare parts.
4. In 1991, Iran began mass-producing long range surface-to-surface missiles, possibly upgraded Scud Bs.
5. In 1991, Iran bought or made operational 350 aircraft.
6. Iran is reported to have ordered 72 F-7 Chinese fighters, 25 Su-24 bombers, 50 MiG-29s, an unknown number of MiG-31s and Su-27s, 15 military cargo planes and 15 Tucano multi-role fighters from Brazil, 170 Scud-B and Scud-C missiles from North Korea, and 15,000 DCA rocket launchers and 2000 SAM launchers from Bulgaria.

Many sources have reported the purchase of 3 Kilo-class diesel submarines.

The strategic lesson Iran learned from 1988 was that there is little to be gained from dominating the Straits of Hormuz if US Navy carriers are permitted to sit in the northern Arabian Sea and conduct continuous combat patrols over these narrow waters. 'Kilo' class submarines, based either at Bandar Abbas or at the Indian Ocean base of Chad Bohr, on which work has now been restarted, would pose a substantial threat to surface combatant operations in these waters, and would also be able to conduct covert minelaying operations close to the straits.<sup>6</sup>

There are other sources<sup>7</sup> which explain that, bearing in mind the Iran-Iraq war, Iran's regional security concerns, and Iran's security needs, the amount of military build up is reasonable.<sup>8</sup> This is generally based on the public version of Iran's defense budget, and ignores actual figures and deals reached. For instance, Ehteshami reports that the official five year plan of \$10 billion (\$2 billion per year) conflicts with the recorded budget of \$5.9 billion in 1989, and "....reports from Tehran in May 1989 [which] indicated that



the Majlis [parliament] had approved a secret budget bill for 1989/90, in which defense spending was much higher than the declared amount."<sup>9</sup>

**Intentions.** Bearing in mind that there is a great amount of re-armament, no matter who you believe, what is Iran's intention? In July 1992, an extremely large-scale Iranian amphibious exercise was reported in the press. "By conducting well-publicized, large-scale naval exercises, Iran may be conveying the message that it would be prepared to resist any American intervention on its side of the Strait...."<sup>10</sup>

Perhaps Iran is feeling paranoid:

The growing international emphasis on the Iranian threat has generated a widespread feeling in Iran that some kind of regional and international conspiracy is under way against it. The feeling furthermore, is that the ground is being prepared for some kind of dramatic action against Iran, perhaps including a military strike. Even some regional commentators have hinted at this possibility. An Arab commentator, writing of the Iran-UAE dispute in the Gulf publication *Akhbar al Khalij*, recently said that Iran is being set up for "Iraq-style treatment."<sup>11</sup>

Whether or not Iran is feeling paranoid, many of its neighbors are concerned. There are plenty of reasons for conflict in the Gulf region, ranging from ". . . ethnic, national, and confessional animosities and territorial disputes to more recent social and political strains resulting from rapid modernization and demographic changes. . ."<sup>12</sup>

On the other hand, there are some indications that Iran has a well-planned, long term goal which the West will find distasteful. One expert believes that Iran wants to lead an

Islamic revolution (which Iran has espoused) and form an Islamic empire, based on Iran. "Iran envisions that this new Empire, essentially a loose federation of local socio-political entities, would then jointly confront the West in a fateful struggle for the soul and future of Islam."<sup>13</sup>

Public statements by prominent Iranian figures offer an interesting perspective:

Ahmed Khomeini, in an international conference in October 1991 to confront the *Pax-Americana*,

We should realize that the world is hostile toward us only for [our commitment to] Islam. After the fall of Marxism, Islam replaced it, and as long as Islam exists, U.S. hostility exists, and as long as U.S. hostility exists, the struggle exists.<sup>14</sup>

Mussavi Khoiniha, head of Tehran's Institute of Strategic Studies, in May 1991, on the American threat increasing since Iran was emerging as

....the only center of national liberation movements in the world....If we obtain the nuclear ability, the waves of Islamic Revolution will get a new power and liberation movements throughout the world will look at the Islamic Republic as a new superpower with all its ideologic potentials.<sup>15</sup>

Multiple sources have reported that Iran has nuclear weapons, if not the intention to build them herself.<sup>16</sup>

In preparation for the impending confrontation, Iran has placed missile batteries on the islands of Abu Musa and Greater and Lesser Tunbs, in the mouth of the Gulf.<sup>17</sup>

Additionally, "In July [1992], Iran began clandestinely building a huge military airfield on the island [Abu Musa], in addition to a naval and air observation and surveillance

station."<sup>18</sup> Also,

Late October [1992] saw the activation of a strategic communications network between the forward missile batteries, ships and the national command center in Tehran enabling operations "under a unified command," demonstrating their capability to defend the blue waters of the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman.<sup>19</sup>

**Bottom Line.** Is Iran a threat to the U.S.? Would the U.S. respond to Iranian aggression against her neighbors in the Gulf Co-operation Council to keep oil routes open? Could Iran defeat the U.S. militarily?

Whatever Iran's intentions, she is undoubtedly building up her armed capability. There is some thought that Iran is a much more capable adversary than the once-touted Iraqis.<sup>20</sup> Certainly Iran is bigger than Iraq, more populous, and even better organized militarily. Furthermore, Iran has had the opportunity to profit from Desert Storm.<sup>21</sup>

The general impression, particularly among Western observers, is that the outcome of the US-led war against Iraq was beneficial to Iran in at least two ways: it substantially weakened Iraq's military power and it strengthened Iran's air defense system.<sup>22</sup>

One additional benefit was that Iran could learn US methods and prepare against them. This report addresses one approach Iran could take, applying lessons learned, to achieve the objective of ousting the US from the Persian Gulf. Chapters II through IV present this approach, from Iran's perspective.

## CHAPTER II

### GRAND MOSAIC

**Situation.** The strategic aim of the Islamic Republic of Iran is to spread Islamic fundamentalism throughout the world, starting in the Southwest Asia and North African regions. A further aim is to gain control of middle east oil supplies so that the price can be raised, thereby improving the quality of life of the Islamic peoples, starting with Iran.<sup>23</sup> The United States has declared that it has a vital interest in the Persian Gulf area. It is inevitable that there will be conflict between the US and Iran.

**Policy.** Any foreign presence in the Persian Gulf is unnecessary and unwelcome. The U.S. is the symbol and leader of such presence. Iran will continue diplomatic efforts to persuade the US to withdraw from the Persian Gulf. This will probably fail, but will serve a useful purpose in establishing Iran's peaceful intent and methods. The high command anticipates that the US will attempt to form a coalition, as it did against Iraq, when it commits to aggression against Iran. There is an operational plan to limit the number of countries which will commit to a coalition, and another to add to Iran's axis. Further, defeating US forces will dissuade coalition members from continuing efforts against the Islamic Republic.

**Strategy.** As the world saw in the 1970s in Vietnam, and again in Somalia in 1993, it is possible to defeat the United

States militarily, or to force the US to withdraw, when two conditions apply. First, sufficient pain must be applied. Second, the US must be made to recognize that its interest is not as vital as it might seem. These two conditions require a careful approach to satisfy.

**Applying pain.** The US, as a democracy and world leader, depends heavily on domestic public and world opinion to supply the strength and conviction to carry out major actions. Iran's strategy attacks this support. It is important to realize that causing too much damage to US forces could cause an over-reaction which would make the US public commit to total war against Iran. This is not in Iran's interests. Consequently, Iran's nuclear<sup>24</sup> and chemical arsenals will not be used. The US will be made aware of Iran's capabilities and willingness to use weapons of mass destruction in retaliation, however, so that it is not tempted to employ its own nuclear might, when its defeat is impending. Also, attacks on American soil or in US waters will only be undertaken on orders of the President, after lesser methods have failed to deter the U.S. from fighting.

**Changing US vital interests.** The US public will be made to realize that, in the absence of another superpower, and the supposed wealth of oil reserves in the world, there is no longer a US vital interest in the Persian Gulf. This will be accomplished by disinformation efforts, and by diplomatic assurances that Iran recognizes the importance of free access

to the Persian Gulf region.<sup>25</sup> While it is not expected that this will change the government's policy, it will create a substantial body of dissent in the US, which will make it easier for the US to disengage.

**Diplomacy and Disinformation.** Iran has covertly established alliances with Syria, Sudan, and Iraq.<sup>26</sup> Also, Iran has established secret arrangements with Russia, the Ukraine, China, Kazakhstan, and North Korea.<sup>27</sup> This has been done to create an alliance system, and to allow UN resolutions inimical to Iranian interests to be vetoed. Additionally, through these secret arrangements, key armaments are being obtained.<sup>28</sup>

To counter the alarmist warnings proclaimed by Israel, Egypt, and the US CIA,<sup>29</sup> a number of noted authorities on Southwest Asia have been writing periodic, reasonable articles in the world press. These articles clarify Iran's peaceful intentions, and explain in detail the reasons for the limited build-up of Iranian armaments.<sup>30</sup> Meanwhile, the secret budget which was approved by the Majlis [Iranian parliament] the last three years has been used to advantage.<sup>31</sup>

**Operational Objectives.** Iran plans several military operations, to be carried out at the same time, using most forces at its disposal. Its operational objectives are: 1) cripple sealoft, airlift, and logistic support for US troops; 2) overwhelm US forces landed in or near Iran, to include forces in Saudi Arabia and the UAE; 3) sink at least one US

aircraft carrier; 4) conduct terrorist actions against US military assets; and 5) if US forces are not deterred, carry on a war of attrition and guerrilla warfare in the Mao Tse-Tung mode. Objective 2) is the subject of this paper.

**Target: Logistics.** The United States' much vaunted ability to rapidly deploy military forces has a critical vulnerability. It depends on logistic transport. This has been addressed in a great deal of the literature arising from the Gulf War of 1991.<sup>32</sup> The United States is spending a significant portion of its defense budget on improving its lift capacity. Fortunately for Iran, the US has not spent as much effort improving the security of the logistics chain.

**Force Planning.** A five year plan is in effect, which will be used to prepare for the operations. It is intended that the Counter Logistics Operation (CLO) will be executable at any time in the last year of this five year period.

The four to five year delay was chosen for several reasons. First, it will allow Iran to acquire the needed equipment and systems. Second, it will provide sufficient time for Iran to train its key personnel, especially submariners, aviators, and air defense forces. Third, it will allow time for Iran to develop the desired impression of pacific, non-aggressive intentions. Fourth, it will allow Iran to select an appropriate time and issue to initiate hostilities. Fifth, it will allow Iranian covert teams to penetrate US logistics nodes and operations.

On the US side, it will allow the US to wear out its welcome in the Persian Gulf, as memories of the 1991 Gulf War fade.<sup>33</sup> Also, during the next four years, the US military will continue downsizing and getting older, especially in key areas such as sea control, air power, and ASW. And finally, with continued problems in Bosnia, Rwanda, the Sudan, Algeria, Egypt, and China, the US will to continue military involvement will be significantly reduced.

A drawback to waiting is that the US will have significantly improved its sealift capability through the addition of numerous medium and high speed ships. Also, the C-17 program will have gone into production, delivering improved airlift.

It is anticipated that, even with improved lift capability, sufficient damage can be done to persuade the US to withdraw from the Persian Gulf region for a space of at least ten years, which will be sufficient to allow the Islamic Republic to consolidate its ownership of the North African and West Asian regions.



### CHAPTER III

#### COUNTER LOGISTICS OPERATIONS - BACKGROUND

Command and Control. Counter Logistics Operations (CLO) will be carried out by forces under the command of Admiral X, who reports to and takes direction from the General Command of the Armed Forces. Naval forces will be supplied by the Iranian Navy and the naval arm of the Islamic Republican Guard (Pasdaran). Air and missile forces will be supplied by the Iranian Army and Pasdaran. Covert forces will be provided by the special forces of the Pasdaran. Component commanders will report to and take direction from Admiral X.<sup>34</sup>

#### Friendly (Iranian) Forces

Navy. The Navy will assign all Tareq class (NATO designator 'Kilo') submarines and crews to the operation. Two of these submarines are in the inventory, one more is on order,<sup>35</sup> and three more will be ordered.<sup>36</sup> Negotiations for the purchase of two Victor II or III nuclear submarines are in progress.<sup>37</sup> Should negotiations succeed, these will be added to the CLO. Additionally, all midget submarines (2 Iranian Navy and 2 Pasdaran naval arm)<sup>38</sup> will be assigned. It is anticipated that if the submarines can safely deploy, once at sea they will be virtually invulnerable.<sup>39</sup>

Air forces. Twelve MiG-31 fighters and forty-eight MiG-29 fighter-bombers will be assigned, as well as twelve TU-22 strategic bombers.<sup>40</sup>

**Missile forces.** Missile forces will include Silkworm, Scud (with GPS homing)<sup>41</sup> as well as integrated air defense missiles (SA-10 Grumble), SA-8, SA-7.

**Covert forces.** Covert forces will consist of elite elements of Pasdaran and selected organizations supported by Iran.

### **Enemy Forces**

The US will initially be represented by a number of carrier battle groups, a Marine amphibious ready group (ARG), an air-deployed and sea supported heavy brigade of the Army, and long range air force units. Of concern to this operation is the carrier force, minesweepers, as well as ASW assets such as nuclear fast attack submarines and helicopters.

It is possible, that, despite diplomatic and covert operations in the area, the US may get access to some Saudi Arabian ports and airfields, and Turkish air fields. This will present opportunities for Iranian attack, and should not be considered a major setback.

### **Projected Enemy Course of Action**<sup>42</sup>

It is anticipated that the US will attempt to form a coalition, and gain access to Saudi or Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) air fields and port facilities in the region. Additionally, the US will plan to use Turkish bases and facilities. The US will attempt to establish air superiority using carrier aviation (and Air Force if air fields are available). The US will also attempt to suppress Iran's Command and Control and destroy its air defense capacity.

These two efforts will be delayed or defeated in the Air Operations Phase (plan promulgated separately).

Ground forces should be put ashore in the vicinity of the threatened country (which country will be under attack by Islamic forces depends on when the US chooses to get involved). They may also be staged in Turkey. These ground forces will be US Marines and US Army troops, mostly light infantry. Waterborne pre-positioned supplies will be sent to the area of operations, to arrive in several days. US surge force ships will be activated, to load out and deploy in 4 to 6 days.<sup>43</sup>

US sealift ships will be activated, and sealift will commence. US airlift will commence, as will deployment of additional troops. Additional carrier battle groups and ASW assets will be deployed from the continental US.<sup>44</sup>

Ports and depots will be established to support ground forces and deployed air forces.

#### Enemy Vulnerabilities

The US logistics force presents a number of opportunities for disabling attacks.<sup>45</sup> These will be covered in Chapter IV. Specific details will be provided in tactical plans, and aren't part of this plan, except when used as examples. See Appendix I for a discussion of logistics force assets and vulnerabilities.

**CHAPTER IV**  
**COUNTER LOGISTICS OPERATIONS - PLAN**

**Objective.** The CLO plan is intended to significantly reduce the logistic support available to US planners. Maritime Pre-positioning Forces and surge deployment ships are to be eliminated or stopped. Land-based pre-positioned equipment depots are to be destroyed. Military airlift is to be attacked and attenuated by at least 20%. Civil air and shipping support for military lift is to be attacked as necessary to deter commercial enterprises from committing their assets to US military operations. US based administration is to be disrupted.

**Method.** Iran will apply a concentration of force against all aspects of the enemy's logistics support operation. Multiple methods of attack will be used, to enhance the probability of success and the extent of damage. Attacks will be conducted at critical points, keyed to the type of target, to achieve maximum effectiveness. Surprise and deception are essential to the success of CLO. Most damage to key logistics assets will occur early in the operation. A sustained effort will continue against selected targets.

**Counter Pre-positioning Ships Operation.**

**Attack Operations.** US Army Brigade Afloat Force (BAF) ships, Marine MPS ships, and Air Force ships will be attacked after load-out, to do the maximum damage to the logistic effort.

Methods of attack available are: sabotage, mini-submarine, mines, submarines, missiles, and aircraft.

Planners will employ sabotage in those cases where reliable agents are in place. This is most likely to be constrained to US ports, where security is most lax. Devices employed will be constructed so as to cause the vessel to sink, and will be fused to do so in deep water.

Mini-submarines will be employed in the Persian Gulf and off the coast of Saudi Arabia, using facilities arranged through diplomacy with Iraq and Qatar. The mini-submarines will target off-load sites, to destroy sealift assets which survive other attacks.

Mines will be employed off the coast of Bahrain, Al Jubail, and other local areas. They will be submarine launched, to maintain covertness. Mines will not be used at Guam and Diego Garcia (MPS ports), since currents in these ports often exceed 2 knots,<sup>46</sup> and the ocean bottom off the port is too steeply sloped to plant mines. Mines are authorized for use off such other non-US ports as Army and Air Force ships are located.

Tareq class submarines will be positioned off Guam and Diego Garcia, with the mission to sink the greatest number of sealift ships possible, and to block harbor entrances by sinking ships. Additional submarines (Tareq if available) will be stationed outside the Straits of Hormuz, and outside the Red Sea, operating out of Somalia, to attack military

shipping as directed, with first priority being aircraft carriers, and second priority sealift ships. If nuclear submarines are available, they will be stationed off the east coast of the US, in the vicinity of the Chesapeake Bay inlet and Wilmington, North Carolina, to attack military sealift as directed by Iranian fishing boats.

Silkworm Missile and Iranian/Pasdaran air units will attack sealift shipping as it comes in range and as directed by the Command and Control facility on Abu Musa (and Bandar Abbas when Abu Musa becomes inoperable).

**Priorities.** First priority is assigned to aircraft carriers and Army BAF ships. Second priority is Marine MPS ships, then third priority is Air Force ships.

**Essential Elements of Information.** It is essential to ascertain and track the location of all pre-positioning forces before hostilities begin. The ability to penetrate port security will determine whether sabotage can be used against sealift assets, or whether other means will be required. The location and intended use of US ASW forces should be determined if possible.

**Risks.** The risks associated with this phase of the operation are evaluated as low to moderate. Premature discovery of Iranian CLO objectives and methods will cause this risk to rise, as effective countermeasures are employed. The risk to all but air forces is evaluated as low to moderate as well, due to operational surprise. Should surprise be lost, the

losses will rise. Air losses may be heavy, depending on the effectiveness of the local air control effort (covered in the Air Operations Plan, separately promulgated), and the success of diplomatic missions to our GCC allies (covered in the Diplomatic Plan, separately promulgated).

### **Counter Sealift Operations**

**Attack Operations.** Due to the limited number and high speed of surge ships, they may be attacked from the opening of hostilities, whether or not they are loaded. These attacks in US waters have been authorized by the President. If it becomes apparent that the US intends to continue to act aggressively against Iran, Ready Reserve Force (RRF) ships will also be attacked in whatever state they may be. Sabotage and submarines will be used in US waters. Mini-submarines, submarines, mines, missiles, and air attack will be employed against those vessels which avoid destruction in US waters.

Agents will be used to sabotage ships in the same manner as described for Pre-positioning ships above. It is expected that RRF ships will provide a fertile field for sabotage. A special case of sabotage will be employed at selected ports which have narrow accesses.<sup>47</sup>

Submarines off the coast of the US will target the surge ships, should any escape sabotage. Surviving submarines will then reposition to the Mediterranean for further interdiction operations.

Ships approaching Iran will be attacked using remaining

CLO assets. Attacks will continue on surviving Pre-positioning ships, inbound or outbound.

**Priorities.** First priority goes to attacking surge ships, which are important to heavy armor division operations in Iran. Second priority is assigned to 4- and 5- day RRF ships. Third priority is assigned to the remaining RRF ships.

**Essential Elements of Information.** Iran needs to know the position and readiness of fast surge ships, so as to position sabotage and submarine assets. Weaknesses in port security for RRF ships must be determined. US will to fight must be re-assessed following successful operations.

**Risks.** The risks of failure and losses are moderate to high, as it is anticipated that the US will tighten security and begin aggressive, thorough ASW efforts after the initial attacks. Additionally, attacks in US waters, should that become necessary, will increase the risk of arousing the US public opinion with the result that the US will to fight may be increased.

#### **Counter Airlift Operations**

**Attack Operations.** Diplomatic efforts to deny the US access to Saudi Arabian and Turkish airfields have a low to moderate chance of success. If they are not successful, counter airlift operations will be implemented. If they are successful, the US will be forced to develop its own fields, and use air-dropped supplies. US airlift is vulnerable in three locations: the US, en route, and at the arrival point.



Military airlift will be attacked en route and at the arrival point. Sabotage, air and air defense forces will be used. CRAF aircraft will be attacked via sabotage and forceful action by local Iranian special action groups in the US to deter commercial companies from supplying airlift to the US military.

Pasdaran special forces will infiltrate Turkey, Saudi Arabia and GCC countries which are supporting US efforts. They will establish positions in the vicinity of air fields. If local air fields are denied to US airlift, then special forces will establish positions in the vicinity of anticipated air drop points. They will employ SA-7 missiles to down military airlift aircraft. They will also sabotage the air fields. If the US does not withdraw from the Gulf after its initial losses, direct action in the US may be authorized by the President. Teams of Islamic trained agents will be used in the US to conduct deterrent operations against CRAF carrier lines, as well as using Stinger missiles against military airlift.

Iranian army air and Pasdaran air interceptors will be tasked against US airlift aircraft as they enter the local area. This action will be taken in concert with other defensive and offensive air actions (see Air Operations Plan, promulgated separately) which will target US/coalition air defenses, such as Air Force fields and Navy carriers.

**Priorities.** Military airlift aircraft have first priority.

CRAF aircraft have second priority.

**Essential Elements of Information.** Turk, Saudi Arabian and GCC intentions with regard to allowing the US access to their airfields will determine whether the US will have local bases to fly into, and will determine whether infiltration will be needed. Which local bases will be used, and where air-drops will occur must be determined in advance to allow infiltration of special forces.

**Risks.** High risk is anticipated for special forces in the vicinity of target air fields and drop zones. Following the initial attacks, it is anticipated that extremely concentrated efforts will be made to eliminate these forces. Moderate to high risk is anticipated for agents in the US, although, paradoxically, the likelihood of draconian action is less in the US. However, a much greater strategic risk exists if the US sabotage efforts are implemented. This will undoubtedly increase the US will to fight.

#### **Counter Depot Operations**

**Attack Operations.** Land-based Pre-positioned heavy equipment depots, port facilities and air fields are subject to attack and disruption. Ground, sea, air, and missile forces will be used to achieve this disruption. It is expected that port and air facilities will be better guarded than in Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm, as that is one of the lessons drawn from that conflict.<sup>48</sup>

Ground forces will conduct attacks on US military forces

in the vicinity of port facilities in the Iran area of operations (see Ground Operations Plan, promulgated separately). These actions are intended both to deplete the ammunition supplies of advance Marine and Army ground forces, and to distract them from guard of local port facilities.

Special forces will be tasked to attack Patriot missile batteries pre-positioned in Kuwait and Bahrain. They will also be tasked to attack and eliminate US air defense batteries and their missiles surrounding ports and depots.

Submarines and mini-submarines will be employed against port facilities. They will conduct surveillance, mining and torpedo attack operations.

Air strikes will be conducted against ports, air fields and Kuwait-based prepositioning depots. These air strikes will be conducted in conjunction with air operations against carriers and military air bases as discussed in the previous section.

GPS-guided<sup>49</sup> surface to surface missiles will be targeted against ports, air fields, and land-based pre-positioning depots.

**Priorities.** Land-based pre-positioned Patriot batteries and equipment is first priority. Second priority is land-based heavy equipment. Third priority is air fields. Fourth priority is port facilities and depots.

**Essential Elements of Information.** Up-to-date information on locations of pre-positioned Patriots and tanks is vital to the

success of this phase of the CLO. The intentions of nations in the Persian Gulf area and Turkey with regard to air field use is also important. Location and defenses of air fields to be used, drop zones, depots, and ports will have to be determined to allow targeting of air strikes and missile attacks.

**Risks.** Moderate to high risk is expected to ground and special forces. Depending on the success of early strikes against Patriot batteries and the success of simultaneous attacks against the carriers, the air strikes and missile attack risk will range from low (successful pre-emptive strikes) to high. Risk to submarines is low. It will be moderate if significant ASW efforts are expended in the port regions. This is not expected.

#### **Counter Logistic Support Operations**

**Attack Operations.** Should the US not withdraw from hostilities following Iran's initial attacks, and the Iran General Command of the Armed Forces so direct, action will be undertaken in the US theater of operations. Teams of agents, which will be emplaced over the next several years into the US Transportation Command (TRANSCOM) organization, will sabotage the computers, tracking system, and requisition system. Key transportation nodes, such as railroad and highway bridges, and equipment depots will be destroyed.

Sabotage of computer systems will be done by viruses, which will be constructed to eliminate themselves after they

have scrambled information. Other sabotage will be conventionally conducted.

**Priorities.** TRANSCOM's integrated logistics control system is top priority. All other targets are secondary.

**Essential Elements of Information.** Susceptibility of TRANSCOM's computer system is unknown. The location of key transportation nodes must be confirmed in the vicinity of sealift and airlift embarkation ports.

**Risks.** The risk is moderate to high. It is anticipated that infiltrated agents in TRANSCOM will be able to activate viruses and escape. Active conventional saboteurs will be at greater risk, due to the nature of their operations.

#### **Deception**

Diplomatic efforts and tame press efforts to down-play the significance of the Islamic Republic's arms build-up will continue. Various military deceptions will be employed. A discussion of these deceptions is included in Appendix II

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Conclusions.** The success of the fictional operational plan presented in Chapters II through IV is by no means assured. It depends on a number of factors. First of all, it counts on the American public's growing disenchantment with foreign engagement. Second, it depends on the US sealift, airlift, and advanced depots going essentially unguarded, at least until they are attacked by a sophisticated adversary. Third, it depends on surprise. Fourth, it depends on the opacity of Iran to US intelligence efforts. Fifth, it depends on terrorist agents being able to penetrate installations in the US and abroad, without being discovered, and without spilling the beans. Sixth, it depends on well-trained Iranian forces executing missions properly. Seventh, it depends on the successful execution of other operational plans (Ground, Air, Diplomatic, etc.) in parallel. Finally, it depends on the US losing the will to fight when presented with severe, but by no means incapacitating losses. A combination of most of these factors could well cause this plan to succeed.

The United States will be ill served if, in addition to building up her logistics support capability, she does not significantly improve the security of those forces.

#### **Recommendations.**

1. Plan for defense of Guam, Diego Garcia, and other advanced

sites, including anti-submarine devices and improved security for the port facilities.

2. Develop an integrated procedure for establishing depots in or near combat areas, to ensure that they are well guarded.

3. Improve ASW, especially against small diesel submarines.

4. Continue to improve minesweeping ability. Don't get rid of helicopter minesweepers.

5. Recognize that one aircraft carrier battlegroup cannot defend itself against a country with hundreds of surface-to-surface missiles and several hundred advanced fighters and bombers. If such a country chooses to attack the carrier, it will succeed. Don't put one aircraft carrier in a potentially hostile situation against such an opponent.

6. Recognize that a lucky or skillful diesel submarine skipper could put that carrier out of action with a wake-homing torpedo. ASW remains important, despite the over-estimated demise of the Soviet Union.

7. Improve security at U.S. RRF and Army strategic ports.

8. Improve security, redundancy and robustness of the logistics administration computer systems.

## APPENDIX I

### U.S. LOGISTICS ASSETS AND VULNERABILITIES

#### Maritime Prepositioning Ships and the Brigade Afloat Force.

The US Marine Corps has relied on three squadrons of Maritime Pre-positioning Ships (MPS) for some time to provide advanced logistics support to Marine Expeditionary Brigades, providing logistic support for up to 30 days of sustained combat operations. Squadron MPS-2 is homeported in Diego Garcia.<sup>50</sup> Squadron MPS-3 is homeported in Guam.<sup>51</sup> Squadron MPS-1 is homebased on the eastern seaboard of the United States.<sup>52</sup> There are thirteen MPS ships divided among the three squadrons.<sup>53</sup> The three squadrons initially delivered enough supplies to sustain 50,000 Marines in the 1991 Gulf War.<sup>54</sup> These ships are routinely in their area of operations, fully loaded, for 30 months at a time. For two months of the cycle, MPS ships are offloaded and maintenance performed, so that the supplies and ships are kept in good condition.<sup>55</sup>

Additionally there are two Marine aviation squadron support ships (T-AVB), one in Baltimore, MD on the US east coast and the other in Port Hueneme, CA on the US west coast.<sup>56</sup> Unlike the MPS ships, the T-AVB ships are kept unloaded until there is a need for them, at which point they are loaded out with maintenance equipment and supplies. Their purpose is to provide an Intermediate Maintenance Activity for deployed Marine aviation squadrons.<sup>57</sup>



The US Army has recently adopted the Marine MPS concept, which it calls the Brigade Afloat Force (BAF). It consists of eight Roll-on/Roll-off (RO/RO) ships and two container ships with enough supplies to support one heavy army brigade for fifteen days.<sup>58</sup> They will also have the brigade's heavy equipment, a port operations package, and a 296-bed hospital unit. By the time Counter Logistics Operations (CLO) commence, the BAF will have expanded to seventeen ships, "...with the addition of equipment and provisions necessary to establish corps- and theater-level bases of operations, plus sufficient supplies to sustain an expanded contingency force for 30 days."<sup>59</sup>

Also by 1998, the US Air Force will have a pre-positioned force of four ships.<sup>60</sup> Where they will be ported and what their load out will be is not yet known.

**Additional Sealift Sustainment.** The US is dissatisfied with its current surge deployment and logistics sustainability. A Congressionally mandated Mobility Requirements Study highlighted deficiencies and formulated a plan to overcome them. The plan is being implemented to a great extent and should be substantially complete by the time of the CLO.<sup>61</sup>

The Ready Reserve Force (RRF) consists of "...government-owned, inactive, commercial ships with military utility. They are maintained by the Maritime Administration in 4-, 5-, 10- or 20-day states of readiness to support deployment of military forces in the event of national emergency when

commercial shipping assets would not be reasonably available."<sup>62</sup> The RRF will be expanded to 140 ships by 1999, and will have improved procedures to enhance the readiness which was criticized after the Desert Shield/Desert Storm.<sup>63</sup>

Eleven Large Medium Speed (LMSR) (24 knot) RO/RO ships are being added to the eight fast (30 knot) sealift ships of the surge deployment force, to allow the US "....to ship two heavy Army divisions to any point in the world within 30 days." The nineteen surge deployment ships are intended to be ready for loading four days after activation.<sup>64</sup> The surge deployment ships are currently planned to be ported at dedicated strategic deployment ports of Savannah, GA, Jacksonville, FL, and Beaumont or Galveston, TX.<sup>65</sup>

**Land-based Pre-positioned Heavy Equipment.** The US Army has pre-positioned heavy equipment in Bahrain and Kuwait; Saudi Arabia has refused to permit tanks and Bradley fighting vehicles to be positioned in its territory.<sup>66</sup> "The Pentagon has deployed US Army Europe Patriot batteries to Kuwait and Bahrain as precautionary measures against Iraq."<sup>67</sup> Additional material may be positioned in Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium.<sup>68</sup>

**Airlift.** US airlift is provided by government owned C-141, C-5 and C-17 aircraft. These aircraft are augmented by the Civil Reserve Airlift Fleet (CRAF) which consists of commercial aircraft leased by the government.<sup>69</sup>

**Administration and Management.** The US Transportation Command

(TRANSCOM) is making improvements to its system to enhance the administration of ordering, shipping, and tracking. These improvements will be implemented with computer systems and satellite tracking. It is anticipated that there will be significant opportunities for disruption of this system as with most computer systems.<sup>70</sup>

Security. Security for all facets of logistics support was minimal during Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm.<sup>71</sup> There has been some discussion in the US literature about the need to provide better security at the off-load site. However, naval escort for Pre-Positioning Ships, air cover, security for RRF ships, and CRAF protection are not in-place. It is anticipated that some enhancements, such as providing Stingers to MPS ships, and providing some escort (depending on availability) for lift assets, will be made. However, such defenses should be easily overwhelmed.

## APPENDIX II

### DECEPTION METHODS

Axis allies (not Iran) will deploy their submarines in the Mediterranean at an increasing rate starting two weeks before the operation begins. This is intended to force the US to deploy ASW assets to the Mediterranean, away from the Iran area of operations.

Iran will use stationary and mobile submarine decoys to get its submarines to their advanced positions, starting one month before the commencement of hostilities. It is anticipated that the stationary decoys will deceive overhead imagery. The intention is to influence the US to leave the ASW situation in the Gulf and North Arabian Sea as it is, rather than reinforce it. Also, the US must be convinced that there is no risk to their pre-positioned afloat forces. Mobile submarine decoys will be used to cause US sentry submarines to leave their positions, allowing real submarines to leave for offensive positions.

Following the outbreak of hostilities, Iran will place a few mines in the Strait of Hormuz and off the coast of Iran, and announce the emplacement of the minefields in accordance with international law. This is intended to direct minesweeping efforts towards the Strait and Iran coast, while covert mining of local (Saudi and unfriendly GCC) ports is conducted by submarine.

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5. See also: Anoushiravan Ehteshami, "Iran Boosts Domestic Arms Industry," International Defense Review, April 1994.
6. John Jordan, "The Iranian Navy," Jane's Intelligence Review, May 1992, p. 216.
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12. David E. Long, "Prospects for Armed Conflict in the Gulf in the 1990s: The Impact of the Gulf War," Middle East Policy, Volume II, 1993, Number 1, p. 113.
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14. Ibid, p. 24.
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21. Long, pp. 123-124
22. Hooshang Amirahmadi, "The Spiraling Gulf Arms Race," Middle East Insight, January-February 1994, p. 47.
23. See Long for a description of the desperate economic straits Iran is finding itself in.
24. Bodansky, p. 30.
25. Amirahmadi, p. 49. "In Iran's view, its interests are best served if the Persian Gulf is an open international waterway, with free navigation rights for all and without any major disturbances."
26. Bodansky, p. 22.
27. Ibid.  
"By late September [1992], several additional Russian-Iranian weapons deals were completed after 'months of secret negotiations' with strategic connotations." - p. 31.  
A "secret US\$5 billion three-year arms deal [with the Ukraine]...involved the delivery to the Iranian armed forces of eight supersonic Sunburst cruise missiles and as many as 50 Mig-29s, 200 T-72 tanks and a number of S-300 air-defense systems." - p. 34.
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29. Bill, pp. 102-103.
30. See:  
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Ehteshami, "Iran's National Strategy";  
Hunter, "Iran: Renewed Threat in the Persian Gulf?";  
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- 31.31. Ehteshami, "Iran's National Strategy," p. 30.

32. For some examples, see Harry B. Karegeannes and William P Martinous, "Supporting Power Projection" Army Logistician, July-Aug '92, or William T. Decamp, "Maritime Prepositioning Forces in the Central Command in the 1990s," Unpublished Research Paper, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI: 1992.

33. Long, p. 125. "...the longer the United States feels compelled to deploy military forces in the region, the more likely it is to wear out its welcome."

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35. U.S. Naval Institute Military Database, January 20, 1994, and Ehteshami, "Iran's National Strategy," p. 35.

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- Richard T. Ackley, "Sealift and National Security," U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings, July 1992, pp. 41-47.
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47. For instance, a large containership will be sunk in the Trimble Shoals Channel, over the Bay Bridge-Tunnel. The railroad bridge and highway bridge at Groton CT will be destroyed by explosives, blocking half the east coast submarines. The channels at San Diego and Pearl Harbor are also susceptible to such measures.
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49. Burgess and Munro, p. 40.
50. Ernest S. Jones, "MPS and Desert Storm" Marine Corps Gazette, vol 75, no 8, Aug 91, p. 47.
51. Ibid., p. 48.
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